

## Section 4

### Thinking About the ELA Strands in the Classroom

#### Reading

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##### **Strand 1.0: Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development**

###### **Description**

Skills addressed in this strand are basic to the development of fluent readers. Students must start building strategies to identify words and their meanings as they begin developing their reading skills and continue strengthening and extending those strategies as they become fluent readers. Students should have the opportunity to study the origins, derivations, and use of words over time in different types of text. Independent reading is the primary means of increasing vocabulary development, and ongoing opportunities to read are essential.

Students who are not reading at a sufficient level to achieve grade level and/or course expectations may need intensive decoding instruction. The ability to recognize synonyms, antonyms, idioms, and words with multiple meanings is a fundamental skill required for comprehending text. Knowledge of affixes and roots, and their meanings and origins, should be limited to elements that are common and useful. A dictionary and a thesaurus should be used to identify related words and concepts.

Teachers should target specific vocabulary words to be learned and explain why they are important. Students should be held accountable for the content of what they read and important vocabulary words used in assigned text.

###### **Importance**

Students who have not acquired fluency in reading will not have the essential knowledge and skills to address the subject-matter content in subject areas across the curriculum. Beyond their English courses, students must be able to decipher and understand a body of information as it relates to the subject being taught (e.g., history, science, and mathematics).

Since the best tool for vocabulary development is independent reading, it is necessary to plan time for this type of activity. Students who have learned how to use context cues and historical clues, along with dictionaries and thesauruses, will be able to use these strategies during independent reading. This type of practice reinforces foundational skills, builds confidence, and motivates students to read a broader range of topics.

**Expectation**

Students should be able to:

- Clarify word meanings through definitions, examples, restatements, and contrasts
- Use a dictionary and a thesaurus to determine related words and meanings
- Understand the meanings of unfamiliar words through context cues
- Recognize that knowledge of root words can lead to the meaning of many other words (e.g., solar, solstice, solarium)
- Recognize word derivations because of their knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Norse mythology
- Distinguish between what the words say and the implied meaning of the words
- Know the importance of reviewing all work in vocabulary study
- Read aloud with grade-appropriate fluency and accuracy

**Strand 2.0 Reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials)****Description**

Reading comprehension is more than recognizing and sounding out words on a page. It is the ability to gain meaning from print and understand text. The CAHSEE is designed to assess how well students comprehend what they are reading at a literal level (getting the facts), inferential level (making some interpretations), and applied level (going beyond the material). The focus is on how well students can comprehend and analyze informational materials, not just literary works. Informational materials are expository rather than narrative and require students to use specific strategies to construct meaning.

**Importance**

Reading is a complex process that requires an integration of skills and knowledge. The ultimate goal of reading is comprehension, and skillful readers have the skills, knowledge, and strategies to understand narrative and informational text. Students can be taught the strategies needed to improve their comprehension of difficult texts. Much of the expository reading in high school is found in textbooks and readings assigned in classes across the curriculum; therefore, responsibility for improving reading comprehension of informational materials needs to be shared by teachers in all disciplines.

Skillful readers know how and when to use reading strategies. They know how to select and organize information, use their own prior knowledge, and generate questions about the text according to their reading purposes. Students should be expected to develop critical-thinking skills such as synthesizing the content from a variety of sources, paraphrasing ideas and connecting them to other sources, and extending their ideas in primary and secondary sources through analysis, evaluation, and elaboration. In grades 9 and 10, students should also be able to analyze the structural elements of workplace documents (e.g., business letters, memos, minutes, warranties, contracts, and procedural manuals). Much of the reading done in high school and in the workplace is expository. It is essential for students to be able to understand and use informational materials to succeed in today's technological and competitive world.

**Expectation**

Skillful readers:

- Have a high degree of rapid and automatic word recognition
- Become actively involved in the reading
- Have an ongoing internal dialogue with the text
- Make predictions about what they are reading
- Relate prior knowledge to the topic they are reading
- Read with specific purposes
- Apply appropriate decoding and analysis for comprehension strategies when necessary

To successfully analyze the structural features of informational materials, students should be able to:

- Understand the features and functions (e.g., fonts, italics, underlining, type size, graphics, table of contents, headings and subheadings) of workplace documents. Workplace documents include, but are not limited to, business letters, memos, minutes, and procedural manuals
- Analyze the structure and format of expository and functional workplace documents and explain how authors use various structures (e.g., internal organizational patterns: sequences, listing, compare-contrast, cause-effect, problem-solution, and prepositional support structures) to achieve their purposes

To successfully analyze the content of informational materials, students should be able to:

- Synthesize the content from several sources on a single issue from writings by a single author (e.g., identify main ideas and important details from several sources)
- Paraphrase the important information and ideas and connect them to other sources
- Identify the difference between primary and secondary sources
- Extend ideas presented in primary or secondary sources through analysis, evaluation, and elaboration

**Strand 3.0 Literary Response and Analysis****Description**

The literary response and analysis strand is one that is traditionally the most familiar to English teachers at the secondary level. Literary text includes, but is not limited to, novels, short stories, essays, poetry, and plays. Although students learn about the elements of literature in earlier grades, students in grades 9 and 10 are expected to understand literary elements in depth. The CAHSEE is designed to assess how well students understand the characteristics and purposes of the major genres in literature, as well as how they use their understanding of literary elements to analyze and respond to what they are reading. Students need to spend time reading high quality literature inside and outside of the classroom. In grades 9 and 10, students are expected to read independently about one and one-half million words annually. Independent reading can significantly improve students' reading comprehension.

**Importance**

The goal for teaching literary response and analysis goes beyond having students define literary terms. The goal is to have students understand and use those terms to analyze, interpret, and evaluate the literary piece. Students need guided practice to analyze elements such as:

- Characters, interactions among characters, and interactions between characters and plot
- Time and sequence (e.g., foreshadowing and flashbacks)
- Comparison of universal themes in several works
- Literary elements such as figurative language, allegory, and symbolism
- Ambiguities, contradictions, and ironies in text
- Voice, persona, and point of view

Analyzing and responding to literary works are skills that require explicit instructional strategies. This content strand offers insight into how well students are progressing in developing these skills.

**Expectation**

Students should be able to:

- Analyze relationships between the purposes and characteristics of different forms of dramatic and other kinds of literature
- Determine characters' traits by what they characters say or do
- Analyze interactions between what main and subordinate characters say about themselves in narration, dialogue, dramatic monologue, and soliloquy
- Compare works that express a universal theme
- Interpret and evaluate the impact of ambiguities, subtleties, contradictions, ironies, and incongruities in text
- Explain how voice, persona, and the choice of a narrator affect characterization and the tone, plot, and credibility of a text
- Analyze a work of literature, showing how it reflects the heritage, traditions, attitudes, and beliefs of its author
- Evaluate the aesthetic qualities of style, including the impact of diction and figurative language on tone, mood, and theme, using the terminology of literary criticism

## Writing

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### Strand 1.0 Writing Strategies

#### Description

A strategy is a plan or procedure for achieving some end, and in the case of this writing strand, the end is a coherent and focused essay. The CAHSEE is designed to assess how well students are able to use learned strategies to write essays that convey clear and distinctive perspectives on a subject, present a reasoned argument, and maintain a consistent tone and focus.

#### Importance

When students write, they put together facts and ideas and create something new. By grades 9 and 10, students should be able to create multi-paragraph essays using a variety of effective and coherent organizational patterns. Additionally, students are expected to know how to document support of statements and assertions from the text in a polished and sophisticated way. Writing is a skill that can be learned, and this strand offers a window on how well a student is progressing in developing this skill.

#### Expectation

Students should be able to:

- Guide the reader through the essay by providing:
  - A subject and focus
  - A thesis that lets the reader know clearly what the single, generalized statement is that drives the entire essay
  - Paragraphing or chunking that helps the reader know when a sequence of related sentences begins and ends. The use of paragraphs signals a reader when to stop holding a meaning in suspension
  - Transitions or bridges that connect paragraphs and sentences that help the reader anticipate how the next paragraph or sentence will affect the meaning of what has just been read
- Ensure that their writing “flows”—that ideas and information hang together with no major gaps, holes, or sidesteps
- “Labor” over their work. Elaboration has the word “labor” in it for good reason. Good writing is full of carefully chosen specific details, precise language, action verbs, and sensory details
- Provide appropriate evidence that synthesizes information from multiple sources and employs strategies for developing generalizations

### Strand 1.0 Written and Oral English Language Conventions

#### Description

The standards in this strand are mostly a continuation of standards from earlier grade levels. Students are expected to apply their command of writing conventions as they compose increasingly more complex and sophisticated text.

**Importance**

As a piece of writing enters the final stages of the writing process, students must focus attention on eliminating errors with the eye of a critical reader. Recognizing errors in writing is an important skill to be learned. The most difficult task is editing for the types of errors or stylistic problems that may become habitual in a student's writing. This strand focuses on the attention that is needed to identify and correct common errors in a student's work.

**Expectation**

Students should be able to show control of:

- Sentence and paragraph structure, including main and subordinate clauses, phrases, parallel structure, consistency of verb tenses, and placement of modifiers
- Punctuation, including semicolons, colons, ellipses, and hyphens
- Grammar, usage, diction, and syntax
- Spelling

**Strand 2.0 Writing Applications****Description**

Students are expected to apply the general strategies of organization, focus, and revision to create specific genres or structures that are sophisticated and complex. Students should be adept at composing narrative, expository, and persuasive types of writing.

**Importance**

Essays are often assigned, especially in English and social science classes, as a way to find out what a student has learned and, more importantly, how a student uses what he or she has learned. Teachers assign essays to make sure a student can sort through a large body of information, identify what is important or significant, and think critically and analytically about a subject. It is essential to master this skill because over the course of an educational career, students will be asked to demonstrate that they have the communication skills necessary for success in today's competitive world.

**Expectation**

Students should be able to write four types of essays that are addressed on the CAHSEE:

- Biographical narratives
- Responses to literature
- Expository compositions
- Persuasive compositions

Each of these types is described in the table on the next page.

**Biographical Narratives – Standard 2.1**

The purpose of narrative as a type of writing is to present an action or series of actions in such a way that the reader has a sense of being present at that time and in that place. Narrative describes what happened but also may describe how and why it happened. Unlike fictional narrative, historical or biographical narrative must deal with factual events. In a successful narrative, the events are presented in a logical arrangement that makes the writer's intention clear. Although narration may be an end in itself, it can also be used as evidence in support of other modes of writing such as exposition or persuasion.

**Responses to Literature – Standard 2.2**

The main goal of responding to literature is to demonstrate a thoughtful comprehension of a literary passage or an expository text. The writer skillfully expresses an idea about a text and supports it with textual evidence. Connections are made between the main idea of the text, the writer's viewpoint, and the author's style. The most successful responses to literature or text are supported with textual references and clearly address the ambiguities, nuances, and complexities within the text. These responses illustrate a clear, comprehensive grasp of the main idea of the text and extend beyond what is present in the text with original ideas and connections.

**Expository Compositions – Standard 2.3**

The main goal of expository writing is to inform. The writer skillfully produces a thesis and supports it with relevant evidence to provide the reader with knowledge that answers the "who, what, where, why, or how" of a subject. Connections are made between the thesis and primary and secondary sources to support assertions and to enhance the reader's understanding of the subject. The most successful expository essays provide the reader with new knowledge. Clear and interesting information is shared through a confident and authoritative voice, showing the reader that the writer is knowledgeable about the topic.

**Persuasive Compositions – Standard 2.4**

The main goal of persuasive writing is to convince. The writer skillfully states and defends a position about a topic and supports it with relevant evidence to provide the reader with a convincing argument. Support is given to each claim to persuade the reader of the validity of the writer's position on the topic. The most successful persuasive essays provide the reader with convincing evidence. Clear and persuasive support is shared through a confident and authoritative voice, showing the reader that the writer is knowledgeable about the topic.